



Important Facts about Sexual Harassment



**Iowa NRCS
December 2009**

The NRCS Anti-Harassment Policy Statement issued by Chief Dave White in May 2009 reaffirms that sexual harassment is a form of discrimination and is prohibited by the agency. Sexual harassment violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, is illegal, and will not be tolerated.

Managers, supervisors, and employees must remain cognizant of this policy and refrain from perpetuating acts of harassment. All employees must fully support NRCS' zero tolerance harassment policy.

conduct, such as other co-workers. The harasser may potentially be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, other employee, or a non-employee.

What is Sexual Harassment, Really?

Sexual harassment includes repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment is taking place if:

- ✦ you have to go along with it to get or keep federal employment or a position.
- ✦ you have to go along with it to get a grade increase, get leave approved, or to influence other decisions about your job.
- ✦ the harassment is making it difficult for you to work.

Who Are the Victims of Sexual Harassment? Who Are the Harassers?

Sexual harassment, whether as a victim or harasser, can potentially affect any employee, whether female or male, supervisor or subordinate. The victim is not always the person potentially harassed, but could be anyone affected by the offensive

If You Feel You Have Been Harassed:

It is recommended that employees who feel they have been subjected to unwelcome behavior or activities of a sexual nature should explicitly inform the alleged harasser that the behavior or activity is unwelcome and should document the alleged harassment including the date, time and place of the events. Although a person who has been offended and feels they have been sexually harassed is not required to confront the person who offended them, they should report the incident to an appropriate NRCS office (ie: National, State, or Area), official (anyone perceived to be in a leadership position), or even file a complaint to the NRCS National Civil Rights Division immediately.

Since the definition of sexual harassment includes repeated and unwelcome behavior or activity of a sexual nature, it is helpful to a sexual harassment case investigation if the alleged harasser has been explicitly informed that the behavior or activity is unwelcome and that it needs to stop.

Things to remember if you are harassed:

- ✦ Respect yourself. You were hired to do a job, not to be abused.



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- Read and understand the agency's policy, know your rights.
- If comfortable, some things you might consider saying to the potential harasser:
 - "I find your behavior/comments unacceptable."
 - "Would you say or do this to me if your spouse or child were here?"

Requirements of Managers

- Know the agency's policy on sexual discrimination and harassment.
- Make sure your staff knows that there is zero tolerance for sexual discrimination and harassment in NRCS.
- Take complaints seriously when an employee comes to you with a concern. You are required to report the complaint to an appropriate NRCS official. It is a good idea to contact Human Resources staff. Let the employees involved know their rights.
- Provide training on sexual discrimination and harassment yearly.
- Be observant, notice what is going on in your office. If you witness a potential sexual harassment activity or have a reason to believe that inappropriate behavior has occurred, you are required to communicate with the employees involved to cease the activity and to report it to an appropriate NRCS official.

Requirements of All Employees

- If another employee informs you of a potential sexual harassment activity, you are required to report it to an appropriate NRCS office or official. As an employee of the federal government, you are obligated to report actions by other employees that you know, or have a reasonable basis to believe, are violations of law or regulations, including sexual harassment.

- Do not encourage or discourage another employee regarding filing a sexual harassment complaint. Direct a potential complainant to the NRCS' Anti-Harassment Policy (posted in each office) or General Manual 230, Part 401.
- It is recommended that you encourage the potential complainant to talk to an appropriate NRCS official regarding the alleged sexual harassment. However, remember that you cannot agree to keep the conversation you have with this person confidential.

Is it Possible Your Behavior is Inappropriate?

Have you ever been told by someone?

- "I don't like those types of jokes."
- "I don't think that type of behavior is appropriate at work."
- "You are standing too close."
- "I don't like to be touched."

If so, and you stopped the offending behavior, consider yourself lucky. If you did not stop the offending behavior, then it is possible that you have harassed someone. It is never too late to stop and do the right thing.

For More Information

- GM Title 230, Part 401, Subpart G
- Iowa NRCS Civil Rights webpage at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/about/civilrights.html
- Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch